

Convert SAC

19



83

Via Pacis

August / September

I Want My Children to Live

(The following is the concluding portion of Rev. Bob Cook's sermon to his congregation at Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church, explaining his decision to do civil disobedience at the SAC base in Omaha on August 7. The sermon was delivered July 24, 1983.)

As I wrote part of this sermon, Steven and Jason, my own sons, were playing - sometimes fighting - in the next room. I could hear their voices raise with disagreement or crack with laughter over some teen-age trivia. And it occurred to me: Am I going to turn over my life and particularly the life of my children to those forces - the principalities and powers Paul refers to in Romans - human and mechanical, that prepare for the possibility - and in the last few months - it seems the inevitability, of nuclear war. A war that would forever stifle the music of Bach and other great composers - a war that would forever stifle the voices of children at play.

"As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel?"

Why will we die? Why will we accept the counsel of the Pentagon that we must press on for more nuclear superiority, that we are about to become a second-rate power when other military experts tell us that we could cut our nuclear arsenal in half without endangering our position?

As Norman Cousins wrote recently: "The American people are carrying the burden of at least 50 times more destructive power than is required to demolish any combination of military targets...and yet every day, 7 to 10 more nuclear bombs are added to our stockpiles."

Neither Russia nor the United States is a leader in seeking peace in the world. No concession is the policy. National Public Radio news reported an exchange between Russia and the U. S. just last week. Russia has now developed an anti-satellite missile. The U.S. will test an anti-satellite missile this summer. Russia made an overture that they would not produce the weapon if the United States would cease development. The answer was NO.

The Pentagon will get more than 1.5 trillion dollars of our tax money over the next five years. This would be the equivalent of \$30,000.00 to the Pentagon for each family of 4. One trillion dollars, if gathered in a single stack of \$1.00 bills, would reach farther than 67,700 miles into the sky.

In three years we will be spending almost 1 billion dollars per day on military. A large portion of that is for nuclear weapon production.

Are these the things that make for peace?

NO. They are not the things that make for peace. And it is up to people like you and me, as ambassadors of Jesus Christ, who came to reconcile all the world, to remind our leaders and all nations, that our children and grandchildren deserve a future, and they deserve to have it without fear of annihilation hanging over their heads.

So God is raising up in our time anew - watchmen and watchwomen. Those who do not will to die. Those who do not turn responsibility for life over to the planning by nuclear experts. The watch is an urgent task, because, as John Somerville points out, we have been confronted by a common enemy more powerful than death. What we have always called death is, after all, a natural transition to other forms of life, to new living units of one kind or another, and in that we have been given the promise of eternal life. But nuclear holocaust destroys living things in a way that renders impossible any transition to new life. By annihilating life, it stops the cycle and destroys the natural relation of death to life. Nuclear annihilation is the common enemy of both life and life-giving death. If this is not absolute evil, what is? Beside it, every other evil is dwarfed into insignificance.

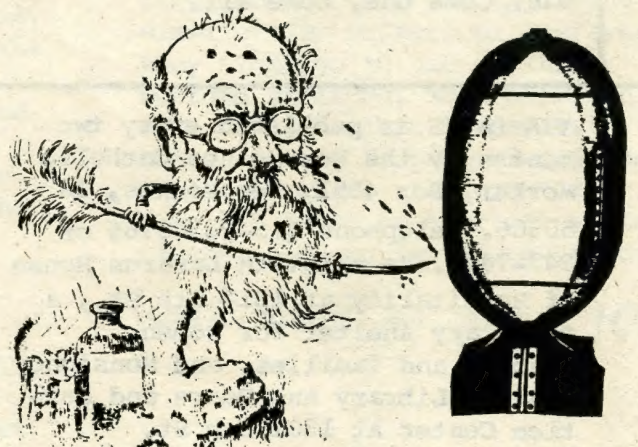
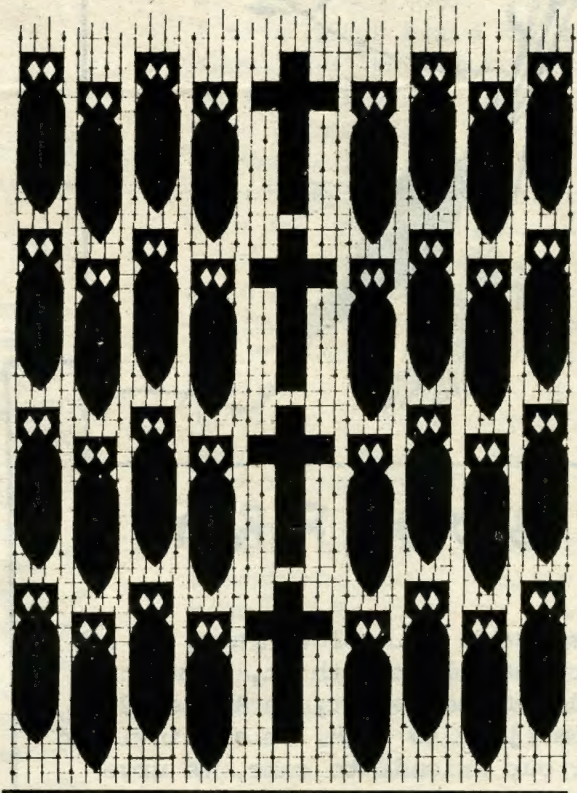
We live in God's creation. What are we doing to preserve it for the glory of God and for the sake of our children and grandchildren? What can we do as watchpersons to turn a world bent toward annihilation?

Ezekiel says blow your trumpet. Let me briefly indicate some ways you can trumpet and make a creative difference as peacemakers in preserving a future for children:

- 1) Listen to God. Let his voice form your consciousness. His voice is powerful and instructive. But it is a "still" voice that comes in moments of searching, struggling, wanting, studying. It is unfortunate His voice is drowned out by propaganda scares and sword rattling. Let his voice be heard. Read, study, contemplate, meditate, and listen.
- 2) He hears our prayers. Even our whispered prayers. Let prayer be a way to help form your consciousness.
- 3) Purify yourself with prayer and fasting. Set aside a day to establish what the truth is. We can read literature and listen to sermons and speeches until we are blue in the face, but it does little good until we have spent time with ourselves.
- 4) The Scriptures reveal the voice of God: Blessed are the peacemakers...Treat others the way you would have them treat you....love your enemies...do good to those who hate you. If you incorporate these scriptural instructions into your personal life-style, it will be impossible to defend any justification given for the nuclear balance of terror we live under today.
- 5) What about your voice? Have you reached the conviction of your conscience that something ought to be done? I have.

I have enough facts to know nuclear weapons are irrational and evil. My consciousness has been raised. I have prayed. I have fasted. Now it is time for me to put my conviction on the line. I intend to do that at the Strategic Air Command Post on August 7th. Several hundred people from 30 cities around the midwest will be present to protest nuclear weapon production and the nuclear war they plan there daily. I invite you to attend with me.

I was led to this decision by the process I have suggested in this sermon; study, contemplation, prayer, purification. But a most forceful ingredient was the challenge to renounce the growing sense of desperation that seems to close in on us all with each passing year. It is also a way to say to my children - and to all children who hear me - there can be a future. God does not intend we sit and take the fear that possible nuclear holocaust brings. I want my children to live. I want to live. Amen.



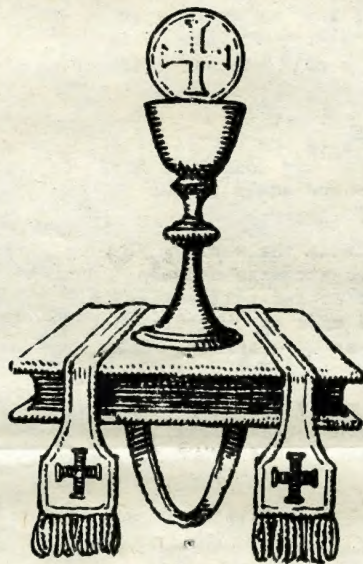
NEEDS

A vacuum cleaner (upright), smoke detectors, night lights, disposable diapers, baby formula, metal garbage cans, plastic garbage bags, brooms, meat, paint brushes, tooth brushes, dental floss (sic), dishtowels, ALL KINDS OF CLEANING SUPPLIES, and all kinds of tools, especially a circular saw. Warm thanks to all our regular and occasional donors; you really do a good job in keeping the Worker working.



MASS

Mass continues to be celebrated every Friday night, but beginning in September the time will be moved up to 7:30 PM from 8:00. On occasion there will continue to be speakers and discussions.



Events

Upper Midwest Regional Fellowship of Reconciliation Conference in Frontenac, Minnesota, Sept. 30-Oct. 2. "Living the Dream: 1984 and Beyond." In Des Moines contact Sr. Gwen Hennessy at Catholic Peace Ministry, 4211 Grand, 274-3687 for registration or info.

TAKE BACK THE NIGHT rally in Drake Park Sept. 17, 7 PM. Call Elyse Weiss, 280-3438.

PEACE CAMP outside main gate of Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona needs people to join them. Davis-Monthan is where cruise missile personnel are trained.



Anawim Catholic Worker Community, 509 N. Genessee St., Waukegan, IL, 60085, is interested in developing a free Peacemakers' Directory of groups and individuals offering hospitality to those involved in peace and justice ministries around the nation and the world.

MERIDEL LE SUEUR, 83-year-old author and activist, returns to Iowa for a tour of the state of her birth. Engagements include October 7 in Ames. For more information or to schedule a visit with your community, contact Joe Grant, Box 123, Iowa City, 52244. Also available is a videotape of Meridel's previous visit to Iowa.

BLOCK PARTY

There will be a Block Party on our very own block, 8th St. between Indiana and Forest, on August 27, from 11 AM to 7 PM. We are inviting all our friends to come. We urge people to bring copious amounts of food to be served to the revelers, and we are particularly desperate for musicians and entertainers of every stripe to add to the merry din. Come one, come all.

VIA PACIS is published every two months by the Des Moines Catholic Worker, Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50306. Telephone 515-243-0765 or 243-7471. We maintain Lazarus House of Hospitality at 1317 8th St., a temporary shelter for women, couples and families, and Monsignor Ligutti Library and Peace and Justice Center at 1301 8th St. The members of our community are Norman Searah, Patti McKee, Jim Harrington, Maggie Olson, Sharron Clemons, Russ Simmons, Donna Henderson, and David Stein.

WOMEN'S ENCAMPMENT for a Future of PEACE and JUSTICE

Seneca Army Depot
Upstate New York

July 4 - September 5

Just as those in power have put us under the threat of nuclear war, night and day turning our dreams into nightmares...

Just as the billion dollar high costs of weapons for such a war (and all the wars along the way - El Salvador, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Lebanon...) are with us night and day, robbing us of our hopes for jobs, education and a decent life...

So this summer, night and day we women will become a counter presence - a presence of resistance to destruction, a presence of life on the borders of Seneca Army Depot.

Our immediate goal is to stop the Cruise and Pershing II missile deployment in Europe this fall. For these weapons will destroy even what fragile uneasy peace we now have.

Seneca Women's Encampment, 339 Lafayette St., N.Y., N.Y. 10012. (212) 505-8493

STOP CRUISE & PERSHING II



Reflections — from — Mexico

by
Mike Colonnese

(Mike Colonnese has lived in El Salvador, now lives in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and is a frequent correspondent with us on Central American issues. These are excerpts from several letters received from him in recent weeks.)

June 17

...We want peace from our Church. We want a Church whose main objective is not tax credits for parents who have children in private schools but rather whose main concern is the indigenous Guatemalan refugee mother who is watching her baby waste away toward premature death because of malnutrition. And the Church responds, "We are being asked for too much. We do not have the funds." Jesus was asked for too much also...they asked him for his life and he gave it generously. And he gave his life so that there might be peace on earth.

What do we have to do to bring the light of this truth to our leadership in the Church? What arguments do we use? What words will persuade our Christian membership that they have not even begun to respond to their brothers and sisters? What predication will convince Christian people that the limits set on their charity were established by greedy men and women not imbued with the Gospel spirit of responding to the Lord lovingly as we meet him in the poor and the oppressed. Why are Christians asking, "What kind of government will there be in El Salvador if the insurgents win?" Why don't they ask what kind of government exists now and has existed for fifty years?

... But the quest for peace and all the political and social action which accompanies it does not solve the problem of hunger today. It does not protect those more than five hundred ex-political prisoners in El Salvador. And there is another question. Peace is the elimination of violence of all kinds. And one form of brutal violence which thousands of people suffer is the violence of hunger and disease. The question must be asked, are those who are advocates of peace in El Salvador and Central America in general, truly dedicated to peace? Do they share what they have with the poor and the oppressed? Do they go beyond attending meetings and staging protests to make their commitment felt in the swollen bellies of refugee children? I contend that the majority do not. The proof is in the bank balance.

The American left can be a vociferous and powerful voice in political matters, but few of the left seem to realize that the people they pretend to help toward liberation may never see the day because they may die of malnutrition.

When the crunch is on, it is the average Christian who responds with sharing. They might not have the total political perspective correct but they understand what the Lord said about whatever we do for one of his brethren we do for him.

The Belize (refugee relief) project has not moved one inch because there has been no response thus far...I have always spoken with great frankness and when I spoke about the enemy with that frankness you applauded me. Now I speak about ourselves with the same frankness. There are thousands of refugees throughout Central America. Some of those thousands are in Belize. They do not have peace because they suffer from disease and malnutrition. We can bring peace into their lives by sharing what we have with them. Those of us who are students cannot use the pretext that we are students and have no funds until we have stayed away from beer halls and pizza parlors. That's the proof of a true humanitarian or Christian spirit and response. If we do not have the discipline to deny ourselves so that we can share material goods with the poor then why bother with political advocacy for a people who will not even live to see it?

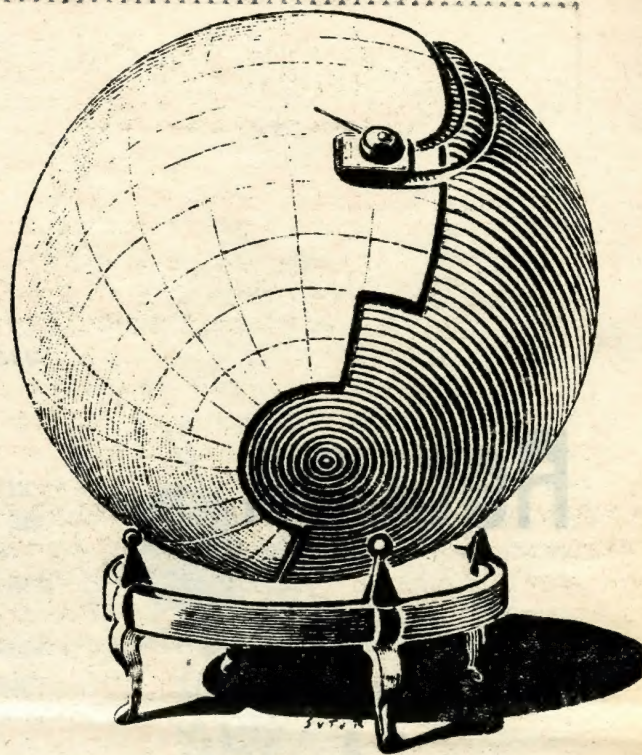
June 18

...When I was living in El Salvador I saw the beginning of the bloodshed. I remember one night a national guardsman hitting a man on the head with his machete. He literally parted that man's head in two. When I wanted to attend that poor creature, the mayor of the town told me to stay away, not to get involved. Such was my fear that it was not difficult for me to respond and move on quickly. That night has tormented me ever since. I could never have saved his life, but I could have whispered a few prayers over his blood-drained body. And I thought of the Lord's story about the good Samaritan.

I think of my journeys to the villages and hamlets (and I made many such visits) and recall, even with anguish, the swollen bellies of undernourished children living in the shadow of the big magnificent hacienda houses where the rich and powerful lived like parasites off the sweated labor of the poor. I remember the good priests, ruthlessly shot down, because they preached the Lord's word of peace and justice. And then, finally, my beloved friend, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, even as he celebrated the Lord's death.

June 20

.... Mr. Magana (President of El Salvador) went to Washington to "thank Mr. Reagan for his support and to ask for further support."



The anti-communist theme was repeated in every conversation, press conference and probably dream he had. He went so far as to say that if the insurgents win in El Salvador all of Central America will fall under the influence of Marxism....

THE BIG QUESTION: Magana and Reagan and the militaries of both countries continue to talk about "what might be." The "what might be" only means one thing...and that is the loss of privilege and domination by one ruling social class. But I have never heard Mr. Reagan ask or answer the question of "what has been" and "what is". I have never heard Mr. Magana talk about the legitimate aspirations of the Salvadoran people to be free from oppression, cruel treatment, hunger and disease. I have never heard Mr. Magana refer to the decades of cruel military dictatorship. I have never heard Mr. Reagan make one reference to the historical realities which led to the conflict. And I think those are the questions to be asked and answered in order to understand the Central American reality today. Mr. Magana showed his true face in Washington. He is not that mild banker everyone thought he was... a middle of the roader who would satisfy "most people." He is a war monger who wants to protect his money interests, yes, even at the cost of human life. Referring to Nicaragua he said that "when the dog dies the rabies dies also." That is a war statement of the worst kind and the American people should be incensed by it. Mr. Magana will not pay the price of war with his blood. Like every other SOB military goon he will end up living in Miami or New Orleans or wherever they might go to use up their hoarded millions, most of which came from American taxpayers' money. But he is proposing a course of action which will eventually take the lives of American youth because his own Salvadoran soldiers

(continued on page 10)

Return

by Maggie Olson

On August 7, 1983 I will join others at Offutt Air Force Base, the Strategic Air Command headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, to participate in non-violent civil disobedience, to protest the war plans made there. When I enter the gates I will refuse to give my name, social security number, and will refuse to be fingerprinted.

My action will be very different than it was 26 years ago when I entered the same gates to be fingerprinted and photographed in order to be issued a military dependent identification card, giving me limited base privileges.

The day after I was born, victory was declared and World War II ended. My mother tells the story that when I cried a white "V" was clearly visible on my forehead. I was a child born of a war romance. My parents met on a riverboat on the Mississippi. My mother was a poor young woman from Mississippi who was going to New York where she would be trained as a Navy plane spotter. My father was entering the Merchant Marine. Both were looking to service in the military as a way to survive.

After my parents divorced in 1954 my mother met the man who was to become my stepfather. He was a sergeant in the Air Force. At the time my mother was supporting herself, my grandmother and me. She needed the security this man offered. The military was a steady income, paid medical care, and so again became a means of survival.

We spent approximately two years at Offutt in Omaha. My stepfather was a photographer taking targeting photographs. We then moved to Salina, Kansas, (the base has since been closed) where he became a crew chief for the B-47 bomber. A crew chief is the head of the maintenance crew on the plane. Each plane has its own crew and crew chief. This particular

bomber was replaced by the B-52 and we were transferred to a new base in Michigan. There my stepfather became a crew chief on B-52s and we spent almost three years at Wurtsmith AFB, Oscoda, Michigan. It was during this time that the "Cuban crisis" occurred.

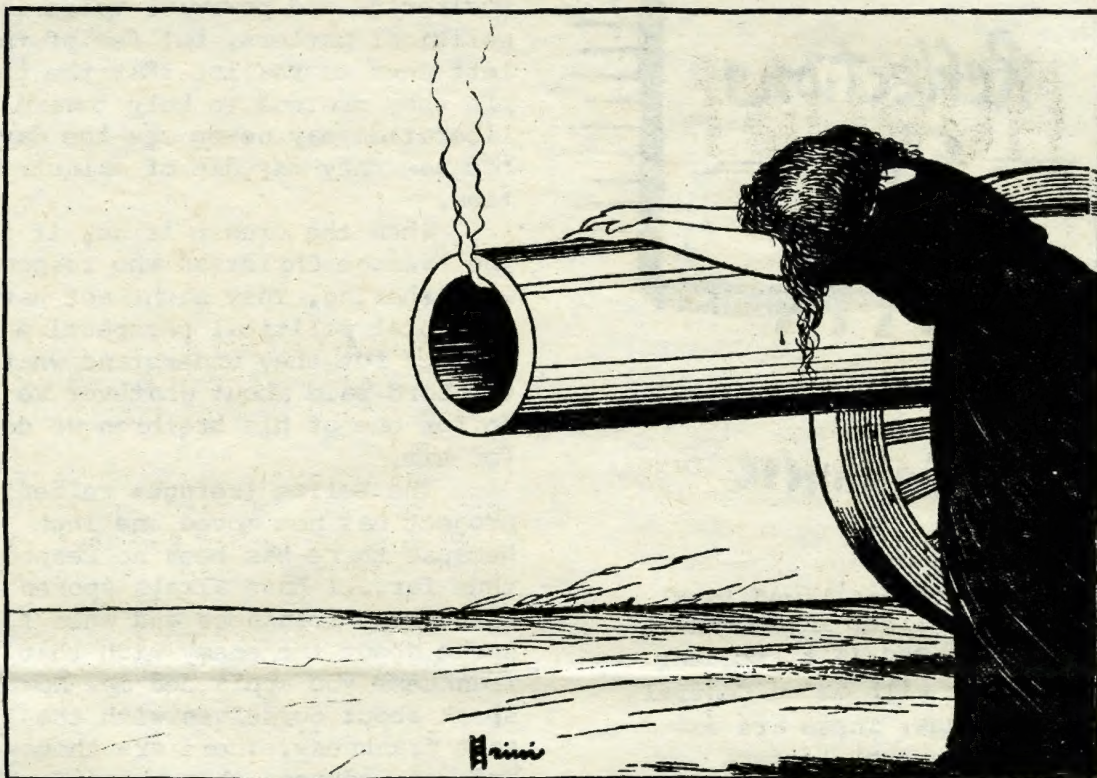
I would like to explain at this point that military life is difficult on the wives and families. The moving from place to place, the "security" which is stressed in SAC, the "constant readiness" and "alerts" in order to maintain military preparedness. You are taught that the military comes first. Military people are very close-knit. This tends to cut them off from the "civilians", as they refer to outsiders. The security of SAC demands secrecy.

During the Cuban crisis in particular the strain on the military personnel was immense. Men like my stepfather knew that in the case of an attack they would board their planes (crew chiefs went with their planes in the case of an attack) leaving their families as potential targets. We were prepared-- prepared to die. We were well acquainted with the potential for nuclear war, fully aware that there was no escape. At fifteen, my friends and I determined we would not survive an attack, nor would we want to. We knew full well the effects of radiation poisoning, and the genetics effect on future generations. A year after the Cuban crisis I found I had developed a fear of death. If I were to wake in the middle of the night, the fear would produce cold sweats, heart palpitations, and would usually end in crying myself to sleep. It's only been in the last three years that I've come to grips with my fear by talking about it.

In 1963 the strain of "constant readiness" forced my stepfather to "cross train" again, this time into Titan II missiles. The four-man crew actually lives in the silo with the missile for several days at a time. It takes two men turning keys simultaneously to fire the missile. To ensure there isn't "human failure" where it would be possible for the missile to be fired by a "confused" crew member, each man carries a handgun to prevent such an "accident". The crews are restricted to three years duty because of the high suicide and insanity rate.

When I protest at SAC I know firsthand the casualties of peace; the "constant readiness" that produces alcoholism, broken marriages, drug addiction, and children with problems that affect the rest of their lives. This is only added to the "preparedness" we seek to achieve which will blow us off the face of the earth. Please remember, at 15 I knew it was hopeless and 26 years later we've only multiplied the hopelessness in regard to military potential.

The hope therefore lies in those who protest in order to make the truth known. We should have stopped 26 years ago but here we are again, possibly approaching another "Cuban crisis" over Central America. Will we make it through another one? Is it possible that after an "alert" we might fail to call back all the bombers and a "mistake" be made? Is it possible for a crew member to become "confused", and for him and another "confused" crew member to fire an "accidental" missile? Remember it only takes two. Seems to me it only took two people to start the world; is it possible it could be ended in the same way?



AUGUST

by Rebecca Rosenbaum

Today is Lammás, August 1, an ancient Celtic holiday marking the harvest. We are half way between the summer solstice and the autumn equinox. It is an organic time in which to revel in the sun's rays, to reflect upon the heat of this season that has given us much ripeness thus far, to look ahead to the equinox, the continuation and completion of the harvest, the coming winter. We sweat the flies, we complain about the heat. We are acutely aware that it won't last forever. The days are not so long.

In this season, in the month of August, all over North America, natives gather for the sun dance. I've been aware of the sun dance for several years now. Sometimes I live in South Dakota and I hear people talk about going off to Crow Dog's, to Green Grass, to Marty, to experience a harmony. I have never been to the sun dance, not just because I'm of immigrant stock, but because, in this season, the far flung community with which my heart feels close goes off to Rocky Flats, to the Trident base, to Electric Boat, to Offut. In this season in which some communities celebrate ours gathers at centers of death to protest the ugly and abhorrent; to demonstrate; to call forth our conflict with that reality; to experience a dissonance.

For several years now a murmur, a consciousness of a dichotomy, has bubbled within me. It is not always articulate. Why aren't we celebrating? Why aren't we in touch with the thick scent of sweet corn? Why are we gathering in plazas, on pavement, sweating in the middle of these cities?

This year the bubble bursts, the dichotomy dissolves.

Our gathering is in keeping with this season. We celebrate the sun when we protest that a human made weapon can exist to burst upon us with the light of tens of suns. Were the men who used that weapon conscious that they chose to test it in the face of the sun's glory? By today's calendar, August 6th is exactly half way between solstice and equinox.

Their act is out of touch. Our actions re-establish harmony, a connection with the sun itself, an allowance for no manifest light greater than that which nature gives us.

And when we gather to protest, what is greater than that we protest is that we gather at all. We are a life force at the gates of the death centers. We are a life force, with our interminable meetings, our struggles to communicate. Our internal conflicts are the glory of aliveness. We are outside the gates with real live excitement, feeling nervous and joyful about what we are about to confront at the gate; feeling nervous and joyful about what we confront outside the gate, within our community, and within our selves. We are singing songs together. We are developing romances. We are fighting and squabbling. We are sweating in the real live sun.

In this season I feel a solidarity with beings everywhere, expressing connection with this turn of the earth.

And particularly I think about the native people of this continent. I am glad that we gather together in time. And I look for, and find, other points to solidify the connection.

You can't have nuclear weapons without uranium. Most uranium in our country is mined on Indian lands. In their homes, the military industrial complex takes its first step towards nuclear disaster. In their homes a path of death is left: contaminated land, radioactive water, stillborn babies. Uranium is to nuclear bombs as draft registration is to the staff for world war 3. It is appropriate to remember our connections with our American Indian sisters and brothers in this season.

The community of Americans drawn to civil disobedience is primarily "white" (I hesitate to use that word because it seems in itself to be a hideous stereotype, more ridiculous when I contrast this page with the color of my knee it leans upon; my knee that's been browning under the sky.) Our values are middle class. We are the ones who can afford to risk arrest because we haven't internalized the battering

and abuse of a reality in which one is arrested without trying; without any conscious and deliberate act; sometimes without any reason at all. We need to remember that there are people who are mowed down like weeds, by covert cars along the highways of remote lands the federal government has deemed "theirs!" We need to remember that we have sisters and brothers, dead, dying, memorialized, and incarcerated, all along trails of broken treaties. We need to remember that we are the ones who were fortunate enough (or foolish enough) to have grown up with the luxury to digest and internalize the message that justice will prevail. We need to be grateful that when a person from another background appreciates what we are about, that person makes an incredible leap. We need to build more bridges. We need to appreciate the forms of their struggles. We need to know that there is no us, no them; our struggle is one. Peace and justice are the same.

At the Catholic Worker, we meet guests who have borne the brunt of the abuse society offers; who most acutely reflect a government that prioritized bombs over bread. Unfortunately, America's Indian nation reflects that same violence.

When we hold on to life at SAC's gates we need to remember resistance camps holding on to land at Yellow Thunder and at Big Mountain. We need to feel ourselves struggling together all over the planet as we take this turn around the sun.



Report

by Jim Harrington

Sunday, August 7, 1983 marked the seventh consecutive year that peace workers have converged on the Strategic Air Command headquarters at Offutt AFB in Omaha, NE. Their purpose was to commemorate the destruction of Hiroshima 38 years ago and to protest governmental policies that threaten to inflict that kind of ghastly devastation on the earth as a whole.

24 groups of people representing communities from as far away as Bemidji, Minnesota and Madison, Wisconsin joined forces to wage peace. The immediate object was to deliver messages to the military leadership of SAC asking them to end the targeting of missiles that are poised to destroy cities and citizens in Russia and elsewhere.

Over 200 people had decided in advance to disobey the air police stationed at the gates of Offutt with orders to deny the protesters admission to the base. This decision to do civil disobedience resulted in the arrest and detention of 208 people.

Many months of preparation and organizing preceded the August 7th events. These efforts were led by Tom and Frank Cordaro who traveled extensively to mobilize interest and recruit participation of those who wanted to give witness to their commitment to peace.

At 8:00 AM Sunday the participants began to assemble at Hayworth Park, about one mile from the Bellevue gate of Offutt AFB. There was a general mood of purposeful determination but at the same time people were cordially milling around, making new acquaintances and renewing old ones. There was a common bond of commitment to peace and nonviolence which was reinforced by speakers and by group singing of peace songs.

The strategy had been well planned and each person intending to do civil disobedience had received nonviolence training to insure that he or she would not be provoked by bystanders, police or anyone else into reacting violently.

10 AM was the time for the planned activity to begin. At about 5 minute intervals each affinity group prepared to leave the park and begin the one-mile walk through the town of Bellevue to the gate of the base. Before leaving, a spokesperson from each group read a statement describing their reasons for demonstrating. While the statements varied, the essence of each was an affirmation of peace and life and a condemnation of war and destruction of life.

I was identified with the Des Moines affinity group. We were the 18th group to leave the park. We all carried helium-inflated balloons printed with the statement, "No more Hiroshimas." Our plan was

to release the balloons at the time those of us doing civil disobedience crossed the line onto the air base and submitted ourselves to arrest. The Des Moines group was composed of 30 people, 21 of whom crossed the line, with the remainder serving in the very important function of "support people." Helen Tichy at age 72 was the oldest member of our group to be arrested. Helen took this action because "I believe it needs to be done." At age 14 Laura Otting was the youngest member of our group to be arrested. She did so because "I want to do what I can for peace, and I can do this."

As our group progressed on the walk through Bellevue we sang, "Give Peace a Chance." I refrained from singing for a while and listened to the rest of the group. I was deeply moved by the sound of their voices and the words I heard.

When we arrived at the base gate there was a large gathering of people. They included support people from groups that had preceded us, a number of news people, a group of counter-demonstrators displaying signs in support of air base activities, and of course a large number of air police whose job it was to arrest us as we crossed the line onto the air base.

We had a brief wait while the affinity group in front of us went through their civil disobedience action. They stepped up to the line of demarcation between the street and the air base property where they were met by the air police captain. A group spokesman told the captain they wished to enter the base to deliver a message to the commander asking that the targeting of missiles be ended.

The captain refused this permission and warned that if anyone stepped over the line they would be arrested. With that the group stepped over the line and were promptly placed under arrest. Each person was escorted to a nearby

bus where they were searched and then placed on board. When the bus was filled that group of demonstrators was driven away amid the chorus and applause from the rest of us.

It was then our turn to approach the line and we went through the same procedure as the previous group and were arrested. This scene was repeated 24 different times as one affinity group after another disobeyed the air police and readily accepted the consequences of that action by submitting to arrest.

The buses took us to the base theater. As one group after another was brought, each was warmly greeted and applauded by those already there. A tremendous feeling of solidarity developed among us. There was more singing of peace songs and an air police officer made general announcements as to how long we would likely be detained and how we would be processed. In general the air police were young people. While they were aloof they were not unfriendly and were certainly courteous with us as they carried out their orders.

When all 208 people arrested were finally in the theatre, along with perhaps a dozen air police who were supervising us, something happened that impressed me. One of our number stood up and suggested we recognize the courtesy of the air police by giving them a round of applause. All 208 of us responded immediately with a standing ovation. These young air police officers who seemed prepared for just about anything, did not know how to handle this gesture from us. Some looked embarrassed, others were pleased and about four arrived at a doorway at the same time looking like they badly wanted to leave the room. To quote VP editor Dave Stein, "That was real disarmament."

For all of us in the Des Moines group, this was our first involvement in civil disobedience. The processing after arrest involved each of us being questioned about our identity, occupation, etc. We were then fingerprinted, not

VET CENTER NEWS

During the Iowa State Fair (August 10- 20), the Des Moines Vet Center will have a booth in the Varied Arts Building. Any veterans' organizations wishing to have Vet Center staffers distribute free materials regarding their activities, please call John at 284-6119.

In September the Vet Center will give four free seminars on Wednesday nights at 6:30 PM. Thomas Searcy, Karen Salter and Penny Michka will host discussions on Post Traumatic Stress Dis-

order on Sept. 7, Women's Issues on Sept. 14 and Agent Orange on Sept. 21. Vet Center staffer John Francis will present information on Stress Management on September 28. These sessions are open to everyone, especially vets and their friends.

First Annual Iowa Vietnam Veterans Reunion-- Cedar Rapids, August 26-28. For info call Allan Gordon, 319-364-4111 or John Francis, 515-284-6119.

The Des Moines Vet Center has ongoing rap groups in Knoxville and Bloomfield on weekday evenings. Call George at 284-6119.

from SAC

once but twice. Then we were photographed and given a ban & bar letter, signed by the base commander which warns us that if we ever set foot on Offutt Air Force Base again we will be arrested, turned over to federal prosecutors, and will face penalties of up to six months in prison. This is a sobering thought. As Frank Cordaro and other long-time peace activists know, jails and prisons become a distinct probability for those who engage in civil disobedience on a continuing basis as a way of working toward peace.

By 3:30 PM most of us had been released, with the question, "What do we do next?" not very far back in our minds.

Maggie Olson from the Des Moines group was an exception. She carried her civil disobedience a step further than the rest of us. Before going to Omaha she decided she would not cooperate with the processing procedure, refused to give her name or allow herself to be photographed or fingerprinted. Maggie knew this could bring severe penalties. She was detained until August 9th, when she finally revealed her identity to the probation officer and was released on bond. We do not know if she will face further charges.



DES MOINES S.A.C. AFFINITY GROUP STATEMENT - August 7, 1983

The Des Moines affinity group is at S.A.C. airforce base because of its overriding concern for the survival of the human species. Nuclear weapons are the greatest insult to human dignity. Their existence poses an eminent threat to humanity itself and undermines trust and inspires fear between peoples and nations.

The planners at the Strategic Air Command headquarters here at Omaha are involved in designing the strategies for nuclear war. We come here in hopes that those with this awesome task will assess their roles in terms of the reality that there are no winners in a nuclear war.

We have chosen to participate in civil disobedience, first, as a reminder that our heritage - our freedom - is a result of multitudes before us who have performed similar law-breaking actions. If previous situations in U.S. history demanded such actions to bring justice to our country, to blacks, to women, and to the workers, then how much more needed is civil disobedience now to save humanity itself!

Secondly, we have chosen to participate in this civil disobedience in hopes that other individuals - those inside the S.A.C. system as well as those outside - will come to grips with the nuclear weapons issue and take meaningful steps to rid the planet of this peril.

We are worried by the magnitude of possible harm from even a single nuclear weapon. Our worry turns to urgency when we know that the world possesses firepower in nuclear weapons 6,000 times greater than all the bombs dropped in all of World War 2. And still the U.S.-European military machine crosses over to first-strike weapons through the Cruise and Pershing missiles.

Is it any wonder, then, that we feel compelled to cross over the S.A.C. line to express our urgency in affirming life? As we do cross over, the Des Moines affinity group will launch its own messages of hope. In bright colors, balloons inscribed with "No More Hiroshimas" will carry personal messages of peace. Truly our hope for peace is in people binding together in one common aim to guide their own destiny.

Sharron's Iowa Axioms and Corollarics for Coping with Power People

by Sharron Clemons

Iowa is the first state in the presidential selection process where voters are subject to watching first-hand the Presidential hopefuls exhibiting their qualifications in corn bins and hog pens. Iowans get first crack at deciphering which belongs there or in the White House.

I have developed the following formulae in my efforts over the years to cope with that onslaught from the "big time."

Axiom #1: Where they stand depends upon where they sit. That depends on what they are ultimately out to get.

Corollary: The latter is the most critical concern you should have when dealing with them.

Axiom #2: Never compromise yourself at any price for any reason, cause or issue. Regardless of the outcome, in the end you'll still only wind up with what's left of yourself and your integrity.

Axiom #3: When a group of two or more consistently wind up in agreement, only one of them is doing the thinking.

Corollary: It is always to your advantage (and the advantage of justice) to quickly identify who that person is and explore whether they should be getting away with it.

Axiom #4: If someone or some group tries to say that you, your concerns, thoughts or feelings don't count because you are a little-leaguer, you are to the extent that you buy that and are led around by that.

Corollary #1: If you, or what you think, feel or do is as irrelevant as they would have you believe, they wouldn't be wasting their time trying to get you to do what they want instead of what you want.

Corollary #2: The same is true when they are trying to sell you this regarding another person's feelings, thoughts, etc.

Axiom #5: Victory in any type of power play (wars and elections included) never determine who is right-- only who is left when it is over.

Corollary: If your goal is to be a left-over, be sure and play. If your goal is higher, stay out of it.



(Editor's note: Sharron Clemons is moving in mid- September to the New York Catholic Worker)



POWER VS.

RESPONSIBILITY

by Sharron Clemons

To some it appears as though changing presidents or presidential policies would resolve the violence and injustices confronting us today. I would suggest otherwise. The injustice and resulting violence we face are not merely the products of any presidential policies, although they are often aggravated by them. Neither politics or any political process will enable us to resolve these conflicts or their causes.

The politics of any political process is nothing more than the means of brokering power among the various interests striving for power. From Plato to Marx and beyond there has yet to be devised any political philosophy or process which, in practice, is any different in that regard.

The question then arises: If one wishes to seek justice and peace then wouldn't one be best served in attempting to secure power for those to whom justice and peace have been denied? Many people seem to feel that is the route to follow. The Catholic Worker movement has historically followed an alternative path: It is better to help people secure freedom from that which oppresses them.

Social, economic, political... power is inherently power over others. Because only God has a monopoly on truth, and humans are not God, any human power brokering process or structure will be inherently flawed with injustice and violence. Substituting one unjust and oppressive system for another is not the answer.

The Catholic Worker alternative to that dilemma is to try to reduce the need to compete in power arenas on every level of human activity. Building or participating in power groups or ploys only feeds and spreads the infernos of violence.

Dorothy Day pointed out that the purpose of the Catholic Worker is to create an environment where it is easier for people to be good. Traditionally that has meant seeking community instead of authority systems, arenas of creativity instead of power arenas, non-violence as the means instead of power as the end.

Gandhi pointed out that the only battles which need to be fought are in our own hearts. Your heart can tell you if it is community, creative (lifegiving), and non-violent; your heart will guide you, if peace and justice are truly what you seek.

The Catholic Worker and the Second Law of Thermodynamics

by David Stein

"You can ask God to do anything but play God."
-- Dan Berrigan

The first law of thermodynamics states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. The second law of thermodynamics deals with a process called entropy. This is the tendency of things, left to themselves, to move from a higher level of organization to a lower level of organization; thus a greater expenditure of energy is required to create order than to create disorder. It is easier to demolish a house than to build one.

We of the Des Moines Catholic Worker are intimate with the second law of thermodynamics. The children trample the front yard, the grass dies, the dirt washes away. Garbage bags break. Ashtrays are tipped over onto the rug, the responsible person disappears, and the vacuum cleaner is found to be broken or missing. Couples fight. There is bitterness and discontentment.

Superficially it appears to be a losing battle. You can put any amount of energy into fighting entropy around here, and never see victory. I myself will for periods of time become almost obsessed with housecleaning, since whichever way I turn there is some spectacle of decay. Things never stop falling apart, so I become sullen, angry, accusing others of shirking their duty. Am I all alone against the forces of chaos? Am I a martyr crucified by the entropy demons? Am I the only thing keeping the world from plunging into an abyss of confusion and dirty dishes? Am I going nuts?

No, Dave, relax, listen. Let us return to a cosmic scale for a few moments. (Always a relief.) Were the force of entropy not balanced by a counterforce also at work in the universe, the whole cosmos would have long ago ceased to exist except for maybe a few stray particles. Consider this counterforce. Atoms form molecules and substances. Gases form stars, which give birth to planets. And on at least one planet, the substances somehow learn to reproduce themselves, perpetuating their pattern. And some of these things we call living, actually become conscious of themselves and their environment, and begin to wonder how it all came to be.

We know that it takes more energy to create order than disorder, so what is the infusion of energy into the void that makes this phenomenon come about?

Now, we return to the Catholic Worker house. It is obviously a place where the forces of entropy run riot, and where human efforts are not sufficient to hold them in check. Here, as in the greater universe, God is the power which serves to create, sustain and nourish.

Look at our community. We come from widely varying places, educational levels, religions, childhoods, personalities. We are highly prone to entropic pressures. We argue, brood and backbite. People arrive with high ideals and leave with resentment. Yet the organism of our community survives and I daresay every one of us is ennobled, is uplifted by the experience of living here.

Look at our guests. They are even further from unity than the community members are, not even having a common ideal, only a similar predicament to hold them together. And some of these people seem to have been sent here for the express purpose of robbing one of any ideals one might once have had. Yet friendships are made as people live, eat and struggle together.

Who can deny the miracle? It is not a sudden, cinematic kind of miracle. The lame do not leap to their feet, go out and find a job. The miracle is more of a slow healing of old wounds, observed in patience and silence.

Now let us look to the world (God have mercy on us.) Monstrous weapons proliferate. Ancient hatreds flourish in vicious circles of violence and retribution. Uncontrolled population and consumption cause environmental breakdown. In many places there is not even food for the hungry. Governments seek to impose a false order through repression of free speech. Yet even in the midst of all this I can see an unmistakable movement toward liberation and fulfillment of the human being. This is God's influence in history.

To bring this movement to its fruition we must work in conjunction with God as caretakers of the creation. First we must know that we cannot do it alone, that we ourselves do not have the power to redeem the world without God's help. Without this faith we are doomed to cynicism and despair.

And second we must know that God requires our efforts almost as much as we need God. Faith cannot be allowed to become complacency. If we do nothing to bring justice to the world, it will never come. Every little bit helps.



(continued from page 3)

don't have the heart to fight this war against THEIR OWN PEOPLE WHO WANT TO BE FREE. Americans should think about that for a while. None of the soldiers are signing up beyond their obligatory two years of service. If the cause is so just, if they feel their country will fall into the hands of the enemy, then why do they leave the service as though a plague had struck them, and why do so many of them desert? The reason is that they know full well that their country will fall into the hands of the Salvadoran people and they do not consider that all so bad a thing to happen. They know that their own fathers have suffered oppression for years and they would prefer to see their own children live in freedom.



July 2

...The sanctuary program has not only hidden the refugees from unjust laws, but it has gone much further. It has also provided a platform for the refugees to address their cause to the people of the United States. It has allowed them to conscientize the...people at large and also affect public opinion.

American Christians today are remembering (what a glorious historical perspective to have now) that during the 17th century the United States was seen as a sanctuary for those who were being persecuted for religious or political reasons in Europe during that period. As a matter of fact, they remember that "sanctuary" became equivalent to "America."

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(Contributions to the refugees in Belize can be sent to COSCA, 2706 Gaines Street, Davenport, IA 52804.)

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Everything Changed

by Peter De Mott

"The splitting of the atom has changed everything, save our mode of thinking, and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe."

--Albert Einstein

The "unparalleled catastrophe" Einstein spoke about, Armageddon, has already begun, if we think of the 40,000 children in Third World countries who die every day as sacrificial victims to the arms race. We do not need another Hiroshima or Nagasaki or an exchange of tactical nuclear weapons among the growing number of nations who have armed themselves with the Bomb. Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, the whole planet and the entire human family struggle grimly for their very existence.

For most of us, our "mode of thinking" has not really grasped the significance of what the nuclear arms race means. We live in a culture which trivializes important issues and diverts us with distractions, even as it urges us to order our lives around the selfish gratification of our own desires. We too easily forget that God made us all and keeps us all in existence, which fact makes us all sisters and brothers responsible for one another.

How then will we put an end to the "unparalleled catastrophe" of the arms race? How stop the ongoing slaughter and prevent the greater, imminent one?

Each of us has a personal responsibility to actively involve ourselves in bringing the arms race to a halt, and in order to do that we must see, judge and act.

By "seeing" I mean those activities which will sharpen our vision so that we might realize

more fully what we face. Prayers for clarity; programs, either personal or communal, of reading and study; discussions with those more informed than ourselves, will enable us to gather the necessary information for a realistic evaluation of the horror of the arms race.

By "judging" I mean determining how, given one's personal life situation, we will faithfully respond to what we have seen, for not to respond means we do not live.

By "acting" I mean deeds of resistance including joining groups of those who non-violently work for disarmament; participating in demonstrations, marches and rallies; writing letters to the editors of local papers; sharing our knowledge and concern with family, friends and co-workers; refusing to pay those taxes which go to support the military as well as other forms of "civil disobedience."

I write these lines from jail in Connecticut where I serve a sentence for having taken part in a non-violent disarmament action at the Electric Boat shipyard, home of the nuclear powered and nuclear armed Trident submarine. With six other friends I entered Electric Boat, where we poured our blood and hammered on a Trident submarine and component equipment. We then waited peacefully for our arrest.

With many others, my friends and I have committed ourselves to beating the nuclear sword into a plowshare, thereby giving peace and life a chance.

Disarmament and an end to the arms race will come when ordinary people act on the knowledge that living in a world where "the splitting of the atom has changed everything" means giving peacemaking our top priority.



THE COST OF LIVING (SPACE)

by Russ Simmons

There is nothing more basic to the way we have to live than the place we have to live in. We are forever meeting new guests at our door who literally call our hospitality house their home, though it is only for 7 to 10 days. Where do they go? The commercial market, even on 6th Ave., doesn't dip very far below \$200 for any real kind of an apartment. Concurrently, guests are sometimes faced with 6 month leases requiring them to be accountable for rent until it is re-rented (during the first six months). They have to be careful about who they deal with.

Getting an acceptable voucher out of social services is also more talk than reality. There is a good portion of reality-- but the shortfall in itself can be too discouraging. In a usual instance, a person must first find a landlord willing to take on the hassle of paperwork and holding checks for clearance, which the majority decline. Of the few remaining, there is still the deposit to worry about. Social Services does not always pay the full rent for the first month. They never pick up the 75 to 100 dollar deposits required; and neither do very many charity services in Des Moines.

Outside of rent is the utility deposit. This ranges above \$30 in most apartments in the area. These same apartments are, of course, either unfurnished or partially furnished, although interpretation of these terms rests with the individual landlord.

Finding a place to settle, to live, where we don't have to constantly struggle with basic food, shelter and sanitary needs, seems so essential-- yet what we are doing as a community, as a city, as a state, is grossly inadequate. There is little good to say, either, for the process of waiting for hours, coming back for lengthy re-appointments, and dealing with a sometimes almost cruel institution.

In our life-affirming witness we are called upon every day to watch after those in need-- to help, to assist, to fulfill. The needs are bigger than the houses. Folks get turned away. There is no place to recommend them. Even this place, which they would call their home, can be shut to them, as to the newlywed travelers long-ago: "I'm sorry, the inn is full."



A PILGRIM'S WAY: CONVERSION IN THE WAY OF PEACE

BY DONNA HENDERSON

The way of peace is not an easy one--not because the issue is too complex, but because it is too simple. The way of peace is the way of conversion of hearts--our own.

Conversion is not a new message. The source of any conversion is naturally Christ, but in order to open ourselves more and more to his message prayer and penance are a necessary part of our lifestyle.

In prayer and contemplation one is touched by God's love and comes to know and love God more completely. Out of God's love, as out of any love relationship, flows a greater love of God's people and God's creation. Out of any individual's love flows a desire to bring one's life more completely in conformance with the other's will. In order to do God's will one must listen in prayer and contemplation to the will of the Lord in our life. Where any individual's love flows of a love relationship with the Creator one seeks to more completely allow God's will to become their will--conversion.

Out of conversion naturally flows action. Actions of love in conformance to the will of God and God's love for the whole of creation. The individual stands not making a statement of their own but with a statement of God's continued love for all of creation.

These actions resulting from our own conversion of heart are actions of prayer and penance. The actions draw us to a more complete awareness of God's presence in others and in ourselves. The actions, however, must flow out of prayer and be prayer-filled.

Prayer would be incomplete without penance. Actions flowing out of a centered, humble and contrite heart correspond directly to the actor's desire for a more complete relationship with God.



Our lives must be lived in the way of peace if we are to embrace the message of Jesus. In prayerful and simple ways, we witness to Christ's presence on earth. Today, our actions would be incomplete if we would not witness to the manifestation of our collective sinfulness in the nuclear arms race.

In repenting, we turn, not only from the sin itself, but also from the benefits of that sin. While pride and greed are the roots of the arms race, security and economic prosperity are touted as benefits. Lives of prayerful simplicity, voluntary poverty, hospitality, and non-violence are contrary to the arguments of necessity put forth by proponents of the arms race. To turn with a prayerful and contrite heart from the lifestyle that requires an arms race for its security is necessary in our witness to the way of peace.

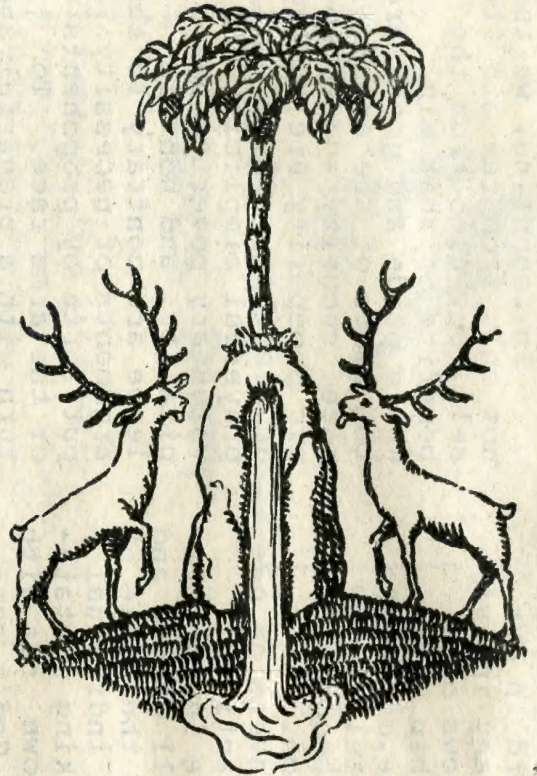
In order to turn completely from the collective sin of the arms race, we must publicly state our opposition to its continued threat to God's creation. We must publicly proclaim God's love for the whole of creation. We must publicly denounce the arms race as a sin from which we as Christians, created in the image of a loving God, must turn.



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Blessed is one who
 trusts in the Lord,
 whose trust is the Lord.
 He is like a tree planted
 by water, that sends out its
 roots by the stream, and
 does not fear when heat comes,
 for its leaves remain green,
 and is not anxious in the
 year of drought, for it does
 not cease to bear fruit.

--Jeremiah 17:7,8